

**Please Note: In order to qualify for Public Assistance (Infrastructure) Funding your county must 1<sup>st</sup> be designated eligible for Public Assistance by FEMA.**

For more information on Public Assistance (Infrastructure) please visit the Public Assistance section of the FEMA website at <http://www.fema.gov/government/grant/pa/index.shtm>

### **Public Assistance (Infrastructure) Steps and Overview**

**Overview:** Through the PA Program, FEMA provides supplemental Federal disaster grant assistance for debris removal, emergency protective measures, and the repair, replacement, or restoration of disaster-damaged, publicly owned facilities and the facilities of certain Private Non-Profit (PNP) organizations.

The Federal share of assistance is not less than 75% of the eligible cost for emergency measures and permanent restoration. The grantee (usually the State) determines how the non-Federal share (up to 25%) is split with the subgrantees (eligible applicants).

**Step One: The Preliminary Damage Assessment (PDA)** is a joint assessment used to determine the magnitude and impact of an event's damage. A FEMA/State team will usually visit local applicants and view their damage first-hand to assess the scope of damage and estimate repair costs. The State uses the results of the PDA to determine if the situation is beyond the combined capabilities of the State and local resources and to verify the need for supplemental Federal assistance. The PDA also identifies any unmet needs that may require immediate attention.

**Step Two: Presidential Disaster Declaration** - Once a disaster has occurred, and the State has declared a state of emergency, if it is determined that the damage is beyond the state's recovery capability, the governor will normally send a request letter to the President, directed through the Regional Director of the appropriate FEMA region, requesting a formal disaster declaration. The President then makes the decision whether or not to declare a major disaster or emergency. After a presidential declaration has been made, FEMA will designate the area eligible for assistance and announce the types of assistance available.

**Step Three: The Applicants' Briefing** is a meeting conducted by the State to inform prospective applicants of available assistance and eligibility requirements for obtaining Federal assistance under the declared event. The meeting is held as soon as practicable following the President's declaration. During the briefing, the State will present the incident period and a description of the declared event. Applicant, work, and cost eligibility will be reviewed and the project formulation process will be introduced. The State will also discuss funding options, record keeping and documentation requirements, and Special Considerations issues. Typically, applicants will prepare and submit their Requests for Public Assistance form during the briefing.

**Step Four: The Request for Public Assistance** is FEMA's official application form that public and Private Nonprofit organizations use to apply for disaster assistance. It is a simple, short form with self-contained instructions. "The Request" (FEMA form 90-49) asks for general information which identifies the applicant, starts the grant process and opens the Case Management File,

which contains general claim information as well as records of meetings, conversations, phone messages and any special issues or concerns that may affect funding. The Request must be submitted to the State Public Assistance Officer within 30 days of the date of designation of an area. The form may be delivered in person at the Applicants' Briefing, sent by mail, or faxed.

**Step Five:** The first meeting between the applicant, the Public Assistance Coordinator (PAC) and Applicant Liaison is called **the Kickoff Meeting**. A Kickoff Meeting is held with each applicant to assess the applicant's individual needs, discuss disaster related damage, and set forth a plan of action for repair of the applicant's facilities. The Liaison will provide State specific details on documentation and reporting requirements. Both the PAC and Liaison help in identifying Special Considerations.

**Step Six:** **Project formulation** is the process of documenting the damage to the facility, identifying the eligible scope of work and estimating the costs associated with that scope of work for each of the applicant's projects. Project formulation allows applicants to administratively consolidate multiple work items into single projects in order to expedite approval and funding, and to facilitate project management. A project is a logical method of performing work required as a result of the declared event. More than one damage site may be included in a project.

**Step Seven:** The purpose of **validation** is to confirm the eligibility, compliance, accuracy, and reasonableness of small projects formulated by an applicant, and to ensure that the applicant receives the maximum amount of assistance available under the law. The process reviews approximately 20% of the small projects formulated by the applicant. This 20% sampling applies to all small projects, including emergency work, permanent work, and small projects with Special Considerations. All aspects of the projects are reviewed including the sites, estimating methods, and documentation related to the project.

The process of approval, as outlined above, begins with the PAC's review of PWs for completeness. Once the PWs are reviewed and processed through validation and Special Considerations review as appropriate, the PWs are ready for approval and funding. The PAC has the authority to approve projects up to \$100,000. Therefore, any project below this threshold will be approved by the PAC and forwarded for funding. Projects over this threshold will be forwarded by the PAC to the PAO with a recommendation for approval. Once the PAO has approved the PW, it will then be forwarded for funding.

**Step Eight:** **Obligation and Disbursement** - FEMA and the grantee share responsibility for making Public Assistance Program funds available to the subgrantees. FEMA is responsible for approving projects and making the Federal share of the approved amount available to the grantee through a process called obligation. Through obligation FEMA notifies the grantee that the federal funds are available but reside in a Federal account until the grantee is ready to award grants to the appropriate subgrantees. The grantee is responsible for providing the grantee portion of the non-federal share of the grant amount and for notifying the subgrantee that funds are available.

Payment for small projects is made on the basis of the estimate prepared at the time of project approval. The grantee is required to make payment of the Federal share to the subgrantee as soon as practicable after FEMA has obligated the funds.

Large projects are funded on documented actual costs. Because of the nature of most large projects, work typically is not complete at the time of project approval; therefore, FEMA will obligate grants based on an estimated cost. Such monies may not be immediately drawn down by the State. Instead, progress payments are made to the applicant as actual costs are documented.

Upon completion of a large project, an applicant must submit documentation to account for all incurred costs to the grantee. The grantee is responsible for ensuring that all incurred costs are associated with the approved scope of work and for certifying that work has been completed in accordance with FEMA standards and policies. The grantee then submits documentation of project costs to FEMA for review. FEMA may conduct a final inspection as part of this review. Once the review is complete, FEMA determines whether funds should be obligated or deobligated for the project.

**Step Nine: Appeals and Closeout** - The appeals process is the opportunity for applicants to request reconsideration of decisions regarding the provision of assistance. There are two levels of appeal. The first level appeal is to the Regional Director. The second level appeal is to the Assistant Director at FEMA Headquarters. The applicant must file an appeal with the Grantee within 60 days of receipt of a notice of the action that is being appealed. The applicant must provide documentation to support the appeal. This documentation should explain why the applicant believes the original determination is wrong and the amount of adjustment being requested.

The purpose of closeout is to certify that all recovery work has been completed, appeals have been resolved and all eligible costs have been reimbursed. Closeout is an important last step in the Public Assistance Program process.